

American Academy of
Children's Entertainment
A New York State
Not-For Profit
Corporation



P.O. Box 1257
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June 8, 1994

The Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 "M" Street, N.W. - Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Sir/Madam:

Enclosed is one original and nine copies of testimony submitted for the FCC's en banc hearings on children's television (MM Docket No. 93-48).

Also enclosed, in a separate envelope, are 21 copies for the Video Services Division.

These materials are submitted to you and will have arrived before the extended deadline date of June 15.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

William G. Weber
President

No. of Copies rec'd _____
List ABCDE _____

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TESTIMONY

Presented To The

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

**En Banc Hearing On
Children's Television
(MM Docket No. 93-48)**

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by

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

William G. Weber

President

June 28, 1994

The American Academy of Children's Entertainment is a trade association of professional creative and performing talent in children's broadcasting, video, music, publishing, and live performance. Our members have been nominated for and have won such prestigious awards as the Oscar, the Emmy, and the Ollie, and have received acclaim for their creative work around the world.

AACE would like to add its unique perspective to the FCC's study of the Children's Television Act's impact on the content and availability of children's programming.

Children's programming would get better ratings and contain more educational value if programmers would tap into an overlooked source of creative talent: the children's entertainment professional who has already succeeded in the educational and community marketplace.

Children's programming is erroneously considered "easy" to create. Which means that a lot of the programming commissioned by the major media is produced by people with little expertise in education or children's entertainment. (Because someone has written for an adult sitcom does not make him qualified to write for children.)

Professional writers for children know how to end a dramatic confrontation with a smile, and not with a punch in the nose!

They know -- beyond flashy special effects -- how to excite and get the attention of children, since they have studied and worked with them professionally for many years.

Professional writers for children are in touch with their audience, and live everywhere in America, not just New York and Hollywood. They write about people that children can both look up to and relate to: shopkeepers, craftsmen, and businesspeople, both men and women, young and old, black and white.

Their stories make heroes out of people who have good values and who contribute to others. (Not just sports, movie, or rock and roll stars.)

There is a vast, hugely successful, educational marketplace with many large companies producing videos, music, and other entertainment. But since it is not covered in VARIETY, the broadcast community does not pay enough attention to it.

Broadcasters need to approach the producers and creative talent who already have successful track records in the educational market and get them to "cross-over" into the general market. (Educators can contribute to successful commercial fare. The animated "Carmen San Diego" on FOX is just one example.)

Parents and kids both know when a program in front of them is unacceptable. But many of the producers and writers of "not up-to-par" programming don't have the experience (of being a parent, or of working in the educational market) to recognize it themselves!

AACE has some suggestions for the broadcast industry:

- 1) Hire experienced children's entertainment talent to write, produce, direct and perform in your children's programming. You'll find that your characters will start to throw more laughs than punches, and your ratings will grow.
- 2) Realize that good children's programming can win ratings and make a profit when it is aggressively marketed in the community and not just thrown out on the airwaves. PBS stations have, for years, been using special outreach programs in schools, day-care centers -- even prisons! -- to fortify their viewership.
- 3) Draw good ratings by using established local talent. Many regional children's acts draw huge crowds to local concerts. A local market television station will profit with a home-grown approach.
- 4) Put as much effort into developing and testing children's programming as you do for adult programming. Finance multiple pilots and use your research departments. Broadcast a variety show for children as a way to discover and test talent.
- 5) Realize that good children's programming doesn't need to win its time slot to generate profits. There is money to be made through program syndication, licensing, direct video sales, and other ancillary ventures.
- 6) Realize that children's entertainment cannot be promoted the same way adult entertainment is. Parents need to be included in marketing strategy decisions, and ancillary products (like records and video tapes) need to be designed, packaged, and sold with respect and care.

When broadcasters broadcast quality children's programming, the ratings -- and profits -- will follow. It is AACE's hope that broadcast television will then make more time available for children's programming in the morning, afternoon, and evening hours.

Cable television does fill the void for children's programs in certain dayparts. But since cable reaches only the most affluent communities, millions of children are without access to the educational, cultural, and social advantages that watching good programming offers.

These children need good programming the most, but are getting it the least.

In the past, Congress and the FCC have made a point to listen to the concerns of parents and broadcasters. AACE hopes that the perspective of the responsible children's entertainment professional can now be added to the debate.

BIOGRAPHIES

The American Academy of Children's Entertainment

The American Academy of Children's Entertainment was incorporated in 1993 as a New York State Not-For-Profit Corporation. Its members are creative professionals in the fields of children's broadcasting, video, music, publishing and live performance. Members have been nominated for and have won such prestigious awards as the Oscar, Emmy, and the Ollie.

The organization's mission is to:

- * provide professionals in the children's entertainment industry with educational and networking opportunities;
- * present a unified voice to the entertainment industry and the general public;
- * demonstrate the industry's appreciation of and commitment to children; and
- * promote excellence by encouraging and rewarding quality children's entertainment.

The organization has sponsored seminars at many industry functions, and is regarded as the voice and heart of the children's entertainment industry.

William G. Weber

William G. Weber, AACE President, is a writer, designer, and magazine publisher. Since 1984, he has published PARENTS & KIDS DIRECTORY, a magazine affiliated with the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

He has served as consultant to the Museum of Television and Radio, the Children's Health Fund, and The Madison Avenue Christmas for Children's Fund, among others. He is the founder of the American Academy of Children's Entertainment.

Mr. Weber and his various media projects have received notice in The New York Times, Newsday, Advertising Age and other publications.

Mr. Weber has lectured at New York University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and Westchester Community College.

He is listed in Who's Who In The East, Who's Who Among Global Business Leaders, and is a member of the Tri-State (New York - New Jersey - Connecticut) Parenting Council.